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THE RECORDER

MOTION PICTURE LABORATORIES, INC., 781 MAIN STREET, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38101

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“WHAT TYPE FILM SHOULD I USE?” AN MPL RECORDER SURVEY

It has been a number of years since THE MPL RECORDER took a comprehensive look at the color films available to 16mm filmmakers. Although the use of one does not preclude the use of the other, any discussion of camera films usually boils down to “what I like or don’t like about color reversal” and “what I like and don’t like about color negative.”

16MM COLOR REVERSAL

I. EASTMAN EKTACHROME COMMERCIAL, #7252, known as ECO, rated at EI 25 T, 16 D with 85 filter. The advantages of this film, according to filmmakers we interviewed are:

1. “ECO gives beautiful colors for exterior shots in daylight. We have no complaints with it at all until we get into poor lighting conditions.”
2. “ECO is an excellent film to shoot if you plan to edit it into A&B rolls and go directly to videotape. We have to do this a lot since our clients often give us production schedules that don’t allow us enough time to go through the lab. We like ECO because it is a good, low contrast film which works well with the TV system, is easy to handle and gives good color rendition.”
3. “ECO is a good film stock and, as a reversal, it is much more economical to use than color negative. I can cut my own A&B rolls, add high contrast titles and the lab can give me color supers when they make the contact prints. With negative, I have to buy optical wet gate intermediates like CRI just to get good supers. With ECO, I get all my special effects like freeze frames printed faster with fewer headaches than with negative.”
4. “I like the color I get from ECO. It has more sparkle and you don’t get all that white dirt you get in prints off color negative.”

DISADVANTAGES OF ECO

1. The most common complaint is the one we have heard for years: “ECO is just too slow. We have used it, along with EF for poor lighting conditions, for a number of years. The film we shot on ECO would always print up well but we were never satisfied with printed EF. We tried pushing ECO to 50 but we didn’t like it. Since we work under all sorts of lighting conditions, we’ve switched to color negative.”
2. “I don’t like the skin tones we get from the prints off ECO. They seem to be red and unnatural. When I shoot ECO now, I want it to be exteriors that do not involve any close shots of people.”

II. EASTMAN EKTACHROME EF (Daylight) #7241, rated at EI 160 D, 40 T with 80A filter and EF (**Tungsten**) #7242, rated at EI 125 T, 80 D with 85B filter.

Although more people reported more experience with #7242 than with #7241, most of the comments can be applied to both.

1. “We have used EF #7242 under poor lighting conditions when we go directly to videotape

Continued on page 2

SUPER 8 WORKSHOP AT MPL APRIL 21, 22 and 23

If you missed MPL’s Feb. Hands-On Super 8 Workshop and you are interested in Super 8 and its possibilities as a production format, for more information write: Bill O’Rork, MPL Equipment Division, Box 1758, Memphis, TN 38101.

Continued from page 1

from original A&B rolls. Although we experimented with both #7241 and #7242, our tests showed that #7241 is too contrasty for printing or for television but we were pleased with flashed #7242 and have used it several times."

(Flashing, as referred to in this story, is a process in which the film is exposed to a low-level, overall light source to reduce the apparent contrast. Flashing is primarily effective in the dark or shadow areas and has little or no effect on the highlights.)

2. "We made a trip overseas a while back and decided to shoot ECO when we could and to use #7242 in poor lighting conditions and have the lab flash the EF when we got home. The ECO came out fine but the #7242 looked terrible in the prints, even after it was flashed. The blacks just danced all over the screen. The next time, we shoot #7247 color negative."
3. "There is no good compatible printing stock for EF that will give you a good optical sound track. Kodak's #7389 gives good color and low contrast picture but the sound tracks off this stock are noisy and you can't get any volume out of them."
4. "I'm not going to worry with EF anymore. We've run some tests on the VNF and we plan to use this the next time we need a fast reversal film. I think Kodak is going to phase out both EF stocks and I won't shed any tears when they do." (Editor's note: According to Kodak sources, there are no plans, at this time, to phase out EF or MS stocks.)

III. EASTMAN EKTACHROME VIDEO NEWS FILMS, VNF (Tungsten) rated at EI 125 T, 80 D with 85B filter and **VND (Daylight)**, rated at 160 D, 40 T with 80A Filter. Although the news films have been used most extensively in television, other filmmakers are also shooting them.

Here are some of the comments we heard about the video news films:

1. "The video news films have a shorter processing time due to the elimination of the pre-hardener and neutralizer steps in processing. Bypassing these steps has also cut down on the 'blue comets' we used to get with our in-house EF process."
2. According to the television people we talked to, VNF can be force-processed successfully and many stations use "force one stop" as their "normal" process. Of course, just how good a film looks after force-processing is a matter of opinion. In general, a film force-processed for broadcast will look better on the air than that same footage would look after it was printed.
3. "We have shot some spots on VNF under poor

light conditions and edited the original into A&B rolls for videotaping. Although we prefer to use ECO when we can, VNF is better than EF because of its lower contrast. (Editor's note: Kodak, in their publication *TELEK*, explains VNF this way: "...that portion of the film's characteristic curve that reproduces highlights is lower in contrast than most color reversal camera original films, making it easier to maintain quality in uncontrolled lighting conditions.")

4. "Compared to EF, we think VNF has better skin tones, more detail in the shadows, better color saturation and a sharper image."
5. "Although it looks better than EF on television, it is so flat that you lose it if you shoot it on a gray day. It just doesn't have any snap or sparkle."
5. "VNF is a poor film if you have to print it. It has the same problem that EF does in that there is no good compatible print stock. If you print to 7390, you get good sound but the picture is too contrasty. I understand that Kodak has come out with a new stock called VN #7399. I'll be interested in seeing how it works out with VNF."

IV. EASTMAN KODAK EKTACHROME VNX (Tungsten) #7250, rated at EI 400 T and 250 D with 85B filter. At this time, this film has been trade tested and became available for general distribution in March 1977. Until it has achieved a wider distribution and we have seen more of it used by our customers, we can only pass on what Kodak has to say about VNX: Although it is normally rated at EI 400 T "Eastman Ektachrome #7250 can be exposed at EI 800 or higher with extended processing. The new film displays excellent forced-processing characteristics and, at these higher speeds, maintains its neutral color balance."

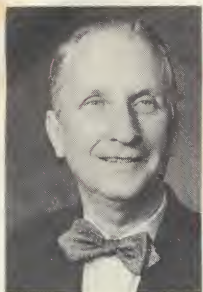
16MM COLOR NEGATIVE

V. EASTMAN COLOR NEGATIVE II - #7247, rated 100 T and 64 D with 85 filter. The comment we heard most about #7247 was this: "The new color negative has become our primary camera stock." According to the people we talked to, these are the good points going for #7247:

1. "It makes a good one-stock camera film. We used to shoot on ECO and use EF for poor lighting conditions but there was too much difference in the color and grain structure of these stocks. We shoot a lot of documentary material and #7247 has been a life saver with its extra speed. We can shoot it under almost any condition, push it to 200 or shoot in daylight, and still get consistently good color and grain."

Continued on page 3

Edited by: I



McGeary
Speaking

THE LAB CAN'T ALWAYS "FIX" IT FOR YOU

After you have read the lead story in this issue of The MPL Recorder, you should have some idea how other filmmakers feel about the present 16mm color camera films. Although many of the points made are valid, neither they nor MPL nor anyone else can decide which film stock is best for your production. You must make this decision for yourself after testing the various emulsions and answering some basic questions like these:

1. Where will you shoot and what will the lighting conditions be? 2. What is the budget and how much time do you have to deliver a finished print? 3. Will the original be printed or will you go directly to videotape? 4. How will the film be distributed and how many prints will you need? 5. If you decide you must use a film that can be force-processed — say two stops, for example — will your subject matter "accept" the change in quality? Things like increased grain and contrast and, perhaps, a shift in color as compared to normal processing? Or, will you expect the laboratory to take the forced film and make prints from it that look like the original was shot in a well lit studio?

We realize that there will be times when shooting conditions will make it necessary for you to ask for flashing or force processing and we are glad to offer you these services. Sometimes, things work out fine. But, regardless of the film stock you select and how you use it, please remember that the best prints still come from an original that is properly lit and properly exposed. No matter how hard we try, if the quality isn't there, there is no way that we can "fix" it.

Frank M. McGeary

Frank M. McGeary

19TH ANNUAL MPL SEMINAR July 29 and 30 in Memphis

If you are interested in motion pictures, you are invited to attend the 19th Annual MPL Seminar on July 29 and 30 at Memphis State University in Memphis. For more information, write: MPL Seminar, Box 1758, Memphis, TN 38101.

Continued from page 2

2. "We've found that #7247 gives good color rendition, more natural skin tones and more detail in the shadow areas. The prints we get are not as contrasty as the reversal prints or the prints from reversal through internegative."
3. "I always shot ECO and was reversal minded until I shot my first color negative. It is unbelievably gorgeous. I recently saw my first flashed negative and it was very good. I think that #7247 is definitely the film of the future."
4. "The excellent speed of the film allows us to carry along less light. We usually work under available light using a little bit of highlight and some fill. We could never have come out with the quality we get from #7247 if we had been using a reversal film."
5. "It seems to me that the lab is able to give us a better timing job with negative than from reversal. This is especially noticeable when we shoot under fluorescents. We try to use the appropriate filters but, if you end up with a mixture of fluorescents, you have to steer by the seat of your pants. I think prints made off #7247 under these conditions are better than what we used to get off EF."
6. "Sometimes I like to say that if you use #7247, you can light a candle and shoot a factory! It has excellent speed and latitude. We recently shot some footage in a large building and lit only the area around a door where a man was welding. We shot the lighted area first and then we pulled back and shot the whole building. The long shot is a little darker than the lighted area but you can see what's in the whole place, things you didn't see when you were standing there. And, the door area didn't look like a hot spot. We realize, of course, that the available light is a factor in a situation like this but I really couldn't believe how much detail we got on the long shot."

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

DISADVANTAGES OF #7247

1. "I think that Kodak and some of the lab have oversold the idea of force processing and flashing #7247. This may be all right for some of the film I see on TV, for example, where you shoot from a car in poor light, with fast action and fast cutting. You don't have to worry about sharp detail and nice grain patterns here. But we feel we must have good detail and good grain in our TV spots and forcing and flashing do not give us the quality we feel we have to have. The thing you have to remember is that #7247 is like most camera films. It won't look good automatically. You still have to light it if you want good quality film."
2. "I've worked with a number of laboratories and I'm still not happy with the prints off #7247. Although things have improved in the last couple of years, there is still too much white dirt and too many cinches in the prints I get."
3. "I don't think any gain in speed and color you might get from #7247 is worth the handling problems with negative. Since our cutting rooms aren't 'clean' rooms where we can satisfactorily cut our own A&B rolls, as we have done with the reversal in the past, we must buy this service from the lab. I wish Kodak would toughen up the emulsion some on #7247."
4. "For several years, I have been shooting a sporting event at night. I've always shot EF and had it flashed and forced. This year, I changed to #7247 and I am very unhappy with my prints. I think that underexposed reversal prints up better than underexposed negative. In 1977, I plan to use VNF to shoot this job."
5. "Although I like #7247, it presents some real headaches in trying to judge the original. Sometimes we'll see something in a work print that doesn't look just right—say it's off color. With reversal original, we could go to the original and tell quite easily if the work print was representative of the original. We have a hard time doing this with negative, but we're learning and maybe some day this won't be a problem."
6. "In my opinion, #7247 is a luxury film. All the lab costs are up and you can't even get contact-printed supered titles. Every time I send in a negative job, I know there will be extra costs, more headaches and more time spent at the lab. I do not like prints made from CRI (color reversal negative.)" *Editor's note: Although our use of it has not yet been extensive, MPL is*

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testing Eastman's new #7243 intermediate film which will allow 16mm to follow the 35mm system of going from original to intermediate to negative and then back to a print. For more information, we suggest you contact your own laboratory people and get their comments on the new printing stock.)

7. "Shooting #7247 for small print orders can be murder. The cost of the CRI is terrible but you can't risk making 5 or 6 prints directly from the negative because it can be damaged so easily."
8. "With negative as your major camera film, trying to catalog and store stock footage becomes a big headache unless you can also store work print on everything and this doubles your storage needs."

Editor's Note: Although there appears to be a pre-dominance of "disadvantages" on #7247 color negative as compared to its "advantages," most of the filmmakers we talked to prefer negative and are using it for most of their production work. We included the large number of "minuses" for two reasons: 1. Most advocates of #7247 mentioned the same points—speed, good latitude, good grain structure and good color rendition. 2. The problems listed are real to many people and anyone considering using #7247 should be made aware of problems he/she may encounter.

Motion Picture Laboratories Gives You The Master Craftsmanship Your Film Deserves.